

# STRATEGISING FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN WEST AFRICA

An overview of the  
West Africa Programme

JANUARY 2004

NANA K.A. BUSIA, JR.





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Nana K.A. Busia Jr, West Africa Programme Manager  
with editorial assistance from Elizabeth Drake

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## Dedication

This overview is dedicated to all the people who have died in West Africa as a result of the resurgence of violent conflict in recent years.

## Preface

The West Africa Programme at International Alert (IA) has been actively working with partners from the region for many years in seeking to transform conflicts in the area through projects that contribute to bringing about social justice and peace. We are very much aware that other actors have also played a role in conflict transformation in the region. This overview is designed to provide an insight into the history of IA's work there, particularly since the inception of the West Africa Programme in 1998. It provides the context for our engagement in the region, a summary of our projects and work in the area, and an overview of our current strategies. The work of the West Africa Programme would not be possible without the ongoing support of our national and international funders and the dedication and hard work of our partners. We are grateful to them, as well as to our colleagues at International Alert for their ongoing commitment towards achieving peace and social justice in the West African region. In particular, I wish to thank Gilonne D'Origny, Olu Arowobuyose and Agnes E'bo for their support in the challenging early stages of development of the Programme, the dynamic staff of the current Programme team and Elizabeth Drake for her extensive editorial assistance with this report. Finally, I extend my gratitude to my senior informal advisors Tajudeen Abdul- Raheem, General-Secretary of the Global Pan-African Movement, Thomas Jaye, Senior Researcher and Consultant at the Community Development and Advocacy Centre (CODAC), Zack Williams, Lecturer at Preston University, Zaya Yeebo of Minority Rights Group UK and Bibinae Mbaye, Consultant, Senegal.

Nana K.A. Busia, Jr., West Africa Programme Manager



## 1. INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL ALERT

International Alert works to build just and lasting peace in areas of violent conflict. A non-governmental organisation based in London, it was established in 1985 by a group of human rights advocates that included Martin Ennals, former Secretary General of Amnesty International, in response to the rise in conflict within countries and the subsequent abuse of individual and collective human rights.

Believing that the people who are involved in violent conflict are central to its solution, we work to enhance the capacity of individuals, networks and organisations to build sustainable peace and reduce the likelihood of war. We do this by analysing the causes of conflict, enabling mediation and dialogue to take place, setting standards of conduct to avoid violence and helping to develop skills to resolve disputes peacefully. We focus our work on specific conflicts, and, after in-depth analysis, design programmes that can respond at local, national, regional and global levels to the structural causes underlying them. Our work is complex, and we use a combination of approaches.

We currently work with partners in over forty projects in West Africa, the Great Lakes regions of Africa, the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Philippines with a particular focus on the control of light weapons, security sector reform, the impact of development and humanitarian aid and the roles of the private sector, gender and religion in building peace. Our high quality research into and analysis of these issues feeds into the development of long-term approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding based on practical, concrete and accountable initiatives and advocating for policy changes at government and UN levels.

Our Code of Conduct, based on the lessons learned and experience acquired during the course of our work, provides an ethical framework and guiding principles for conflict transformation work, discussion on issues relating to human rights and impartiality as well as guiding principles for the organisation and for the development of policies on human rights. It is available on our website [www.international-alert.org](http://www.international-alert.org)

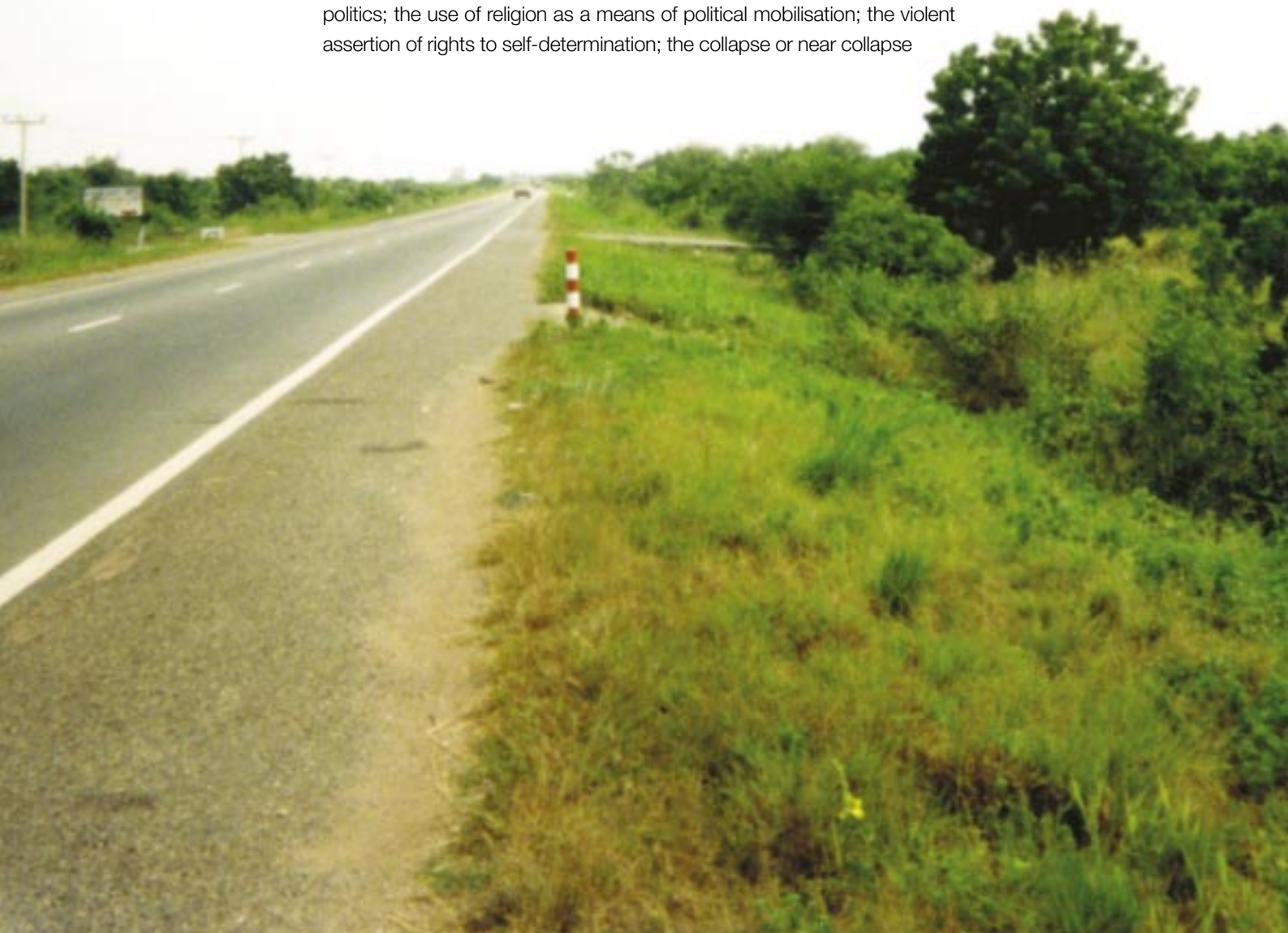
## 2. CHARACTER AND CAUSES OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT IN WEST AFRICA

The conflict dynamics of West Africa should be viewed as one integrated regional conflict system. Even after the post-independence power struggles of the second half of the last century, violent conflicts in West Africa have become more frequent since the end of the Cold War. While most of the conflicts originate in one country, they involve cross-border activities that overflow state borders to engulf other communities and states.

Although there is not one state in West Africa that has not suffered from some form of conflict in the past decade, there are four main conflict areas in the region: the Mano River Union (MRU), constituting Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry, and the Côte d'Ivoire, which relates closely to the MRU conflict; Senegal and Guinea-Bissau; Mali and Niger; and Nigeria, whose conflicts are self-contained.

The impacts of war have had, and continue to have, catastrophic consequences for the people, communities and infrastructure of the region. Conflict in the Mano River area has created a severe humanitarian crisis, with over one million people killed in the last ten years, and the creation of more than three million internally displaced persons and refugees out of a sub-regional population of 30 million. Guinea alone has hosted close to 500,000 refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

Conflicts in the region are typically expressed in several forms: the ethnicisation of politics; the use of religion as a means of political mobilisation; the violent assertion of rights to self-determination; the collapse or near collapse



of the state; resource conflicts and criminality through the trading of diamonds, oil and other precious minerals, arms, people and drugs in parallel markets.

The root causes of these conflicts in the region are multiple. The socio-political landscape is heavily influenced by the legacy of direct and indirect colonialism; the settler factor; the unfinished business of nation-state building; post-independence, militarised authoritarian governments and the Cold War legacy. Following independence, the avowed goals of most West African governments were to 'catch up' with the rest of the developed world. In this process, identity (ethnic or otherwise) was subjected to the grand objectives of nation-building and economic development, thus giving legitimacy to the imposition of one party states, life presidents and powerful executives. By the late 1960s, the military exploited the weaknesses of states and their poor governance through successive coup d'états. In turn, the military proved to be repressive, lacking legitimacy and the competence to govern. By the end of the Cold War, latent conflicts were finding open and manifest expressions in various countries throughout the region. The introduction of the neo-classical/liberal economic development paradigm, typified by structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the late 1980s also contributed to the conflicts by undermining the capacity of the state to provide for the basic needs of the population.

These structural causes, amongst others, are exacerbated by a politics of exclusion, coupled with assimilationist policies, which seek to suppress group identities (religious, ethnic or otherwise). In addition, rampant corruption, uneven distribution of resources, environmental degradation, the militarisation of societies through arms trafficking, the recruitment of unemployable youth, and the marginalisation and oppression of women all contribute to the exacerbation of violence as a survival strategy. As a result, many West African states have open or latent conflicts, which threaten to spiral out of control across the sub-region if not effectively managed. The West Africa Programme seeks to better understand the local, regional and sub-regional dynamics of conflict in the area, and facilitate peace by engaging actors throughout all sectors of society in conflict resolution and the promotion of human rights.

## Map of West Africa





### 3. INTERNATIONAL ALERT IN WEST AFRICA

International Alert's work in Africa largely developed from a series of consultations and conferences that started in 1994 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The consultations brought together representatives from African civil society groups, governments and inter-governmental institutions to analyse the conflict situation and devise mechanisms for early warning and preventive diplomacy. This process of consultation resulted in specific IA programmes of work with a regional focus, initially in the Horn of Africa, then subsequently in the Great Lakes Region and West Africa. Our work in West Africa, however, had begun in Liberia in December 1993.

While working on the problems occasioned by armed conflict in Liberia we realised that there could be no viable solution to the protracted conflict without taking into account the sub-regional dynamics, especially the war in Sierra Leone. We began to prepare to work in Sierra Leone, making contact with one of the sub-region's most seasoned diplomats, Amara Essy, then foreign minister of Côte d'Ivoire and president of the UN's General Assembly, to explore his availability for facilitating talks in Côte d'Ivoire. We also consulted with the then Secretary-General of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim and his deputies, thus ensuring the involvement of the premier inter-governmental organisation in the continent in what was to be a long drawn-out undertaking. Then, in early 1995, representatives of International Alert met with representatives of the military government of Sierra Leone, which was itself concerned about the civil war that was escalating, with mounting civilian casualties and a refugee population that exceeded two million.

Our next step, with the assistance of the Nairobi Peace Initiative, of Kenya, was to organise a conflict resolution workshop in Dakar which enabled contact between a representative of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group, peace advocates from Sierra Leone and a delegate from the Commonwealth Secretariat. We then co-ordinated a 'Joint Action Peace Forum on Sierra Leone' attended by representatives of the West African diplomatic community and non-governmental organisations which recommended a negotiated settlement of the conflict, the creation of secure working conditions for humanitarian aid, and the provision of building blocks for peace within a regional context. During this period, we also consulted with the International Committee of the Red Cross which maintained that no dialogue would be possible unless hostages held by the rebels were freed; they thus offered their good offices in seeking their release, which was subsequently achieved.

The second phase of our engagement in Sierra Leone was based on the pre-negotiations (during the second half of 1995) and the formal negotiations (February - November 1996) which saw changes in the government (two military regimes, and the election of a civilian government led by President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in March 1996). The formal talks were principally facilitated by Minister Amara Essy and led, finally, to the signature of the Accord on 30 November 1996.

The three guarantors of the Accord were the UN, the OAU and the Commonwealth Secretariat. However, the agreement broke down in February 1997, mainly on the refusal of the RUF to recognise the Mission and its aim of seeking the disarmament and demobilisation of the guerrillas. The RUF argued that other aspects of the comprehensive agreement needed to be put into place to build further trust before the demobilisation process could be completed.

#### **Emerging Issues**

Whilst our engagement in Sierra Leone was originally based on a multi-track approach involving facilitation of peace negotiations, assisting a national peace constituency and building an international support group, IA's interventions focused increasingly on the peace negotiations of 1996. Although

IA played an important role in the different events and processes leading up to the peace agreement, we were subject to a number of serious criticisms during our involvement in the county.

During the peace negotiations, IA was one of the few organisations arguing that the RUF was a significant party to the conflict and must therefore be brought to the negotiating table. IA thus played an important role in helping to bring the RUF to the peace talks, working within a complex configuration of political and military factors, nationally, sub-regionally and internationally. IA also played a role in the hostage release process from the RUF, which was facilitated by our relationship with this group. Engaging with the RUF on issues of peacebuilding, with its poor human rights record, raised questions in some people's minds about IA's interpretation of its own human rights mandate and led to criticisms against IA that it had not acted as a neutral facilitator.

Following the signing of the peace agreement in 1996, IA decided to cease its operational role in Sierra Leone because of an atmosphere of mistrust and the inability of peace-seeking institutions to work more collaboratively, but continued to monitor the situation in the country from a non-operational perspective.

### Renewal of work in West Africa

During the following period, IA reflected on these criticisms, learned from mistakes made, and sought to correct the various misunderstandings and misinterpretations of its decisions and actions that had been circulating. This led to an explicit formulation of the IA 'Code of Conduct for Conflict Transformation Work' which drew on IA's experience over the previous 10 years and included our recent work in Sierra Leone. This re-emphasised our commitment to the principles of accountability, respect for human rights and impartiality.

In 1998 IA developed a new West Africa programme to work with local civil society organisations and social movements to engage in the region more systematically. A new team of West Africa programme staff was recruited, which developed a revised strategy for engagement in the region and for the renewal of relationships in Sierra Leone.

The first phase of engagement involved meeting with Sierra-Leonean groups in the UK and West Africans in the Diaspora through invitations to events, seminars and informal discussions that worked towards the establishment of a good rapport. Consequently, further contact and engagement was made with West Africans in international organisations and NGOs, as well as with Africanists and academics in the region, UK and elsewhere. These individuals and groups were consulted on their thoughts about the conflict, about IA's role and reputation in Sierra Leone, and about the potential for future engagement in the region.

The next stage included engagement and co-operation with West African diplomatic missions and governments, both in London and throughout Sierra Leone, as well as formal and semi-informal visits with the Nigerian government, the Sierra-Leonean government, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Governmental meetings were held with the Ministers for Presidential Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and with the Minister for Gender, Youth, Children and Social Welfare. Soon afterwards, IA began to concentrate on normalising relations with local peace-building organisations. Meetings were held with leading Sierra Leonean human rights NGOs, religious bodies, women's groups and many other civil society groups, demonstrating IA's credibility as a neutral, unbiased agency committed to attaining peace in the region. We travelled to different regions and communities, in particular the community of Bo, to discuss their previous experience with IA, and explain the new approach and mandate that we were now working under.

The current West Africa Programme was subsequently created with a commitment to understanding sub-regional dynamics working together with the Sierra Leonean government, civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders and based on the principles re-emphasised in the IA Code of Conduct: clear accountability, respect for human rights and strict impartiality.<sup>1</sup>

## Programme Objectives

Recognising that poor governance is in part responsible for the proliferation of conflicts in the region, and that the conflicts are all interconnected, the West Africa Programme's objective at the regional level is to strengthen the capacity of civil society and selected state departments at local, national and regional levels to participate in and contribute to peace and human security. The strategy pursued by the programme in order to realise this objective is the adoption of an integrated approach to the conflicts, seeking sectoral integration of work at local and national levels, and interfacing with sub-regional and regional capacities. As individual states find it increasingly difficult to deal with conflicts effectively, strategies for peace are being sought within the normative frameworks created by regional bodies. These considerations have underpinned our strategies of working at the regional level with ECOWAS and throughout the Mano River Union countries.

The West Africa Programme uses the following approaches and methodologies to carry out its work:

- Research
- Consultation and field visits
- Informal contacts and networks
- Attention to cultural context
- Track 1 and Track 2 approaches
- Advocacy informed by policy and field experiences
- Mainstreaming of human rights and gender approaches

The guiding principles of our work are:

- Primacy of people in transforming conflicts
- Humanitarian concern
- Human rights and humanitarian laws & principles
- Respect for gender and cultural diversity
- Impartiality
- Independence
- Accountability
- Confidentiality
- Partnerships
- Institutional learning

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Ed Garcia and Martin Honeywell for their comments on this section of the report



## 4. MAIN CONFLICTS IN WEST AFRICA

The political landscape of the West African region, particularly since the end of the Cold War, has been dotted with violent conflict. The conflicts in West Africa are mostly sub-regional, with the exception of Nigeria, whose conflicts are largely self-contained. The dominant conflict in contemporary West Africa is the sub-regional conflict raging in the Mano River Union countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Conakry. This conflict has created one of the worst humanitarian crises in Africa's history: over one million people have been killed during the last ten years in the MRU countries and another 3 million displaced or made refugees out of a total population of 15 million. Guinea has hosted close to half a million refugees, making it one of the largest refugee hosting countries in the world.

The conflicts in the MRU region are rooted in the history of the countries, territorial claims, colonial legacies of dysfunctional states and authoritarian institutions, and the settler factor in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Tensions in the sub-region over territorial disputes go back to independence, manifesting themselves in accusations and counter accusations amongst the three governments of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The combination of such events has caused a mutual air of distrust between all three nations, and has now also resulted in tensions with other neighbouring countries including Côte d'Ivoire.

### Liberia

The structural causes of the conflict in Liberia are deeply rooted in the country's history, characterised by gross inequalities in the distribution of power and resources, and a reliance on violence to realise economic and political objectives. Re-settled in the early 19th century by freeborn Blacks and former slaves from America, Liberia has always struggled with its double cultural heritage: that of the settlers and of the indigenous Africans. Freed slaves from the USA returned to Africa and formed the Americo-Liberian community, which rapidly took control of

MEETING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS TO DISCUSS AND EXPLAIN THE LIBERIAN PEACE AGREEMENT, SEPTEMBER 2003



politics and the economy, alienating the native population. Feeling excluded, indigenous groups began to resist domination, and under the leadership of Samuel Doe, instigated the bloody coup d'état of 1980.

Doe's popularity was short-lived, as he too ruled through an administration of repression and corruption. His regime was a model of bad governance, committing gross violations of human rights and providing no basic social services or mechanisms for widespread democratic participation. In 1989, Americo-Liberian Charles Taylor formed the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and attacked the Liberian government. The seven-year civil war that followed led to the death of over 200,000 people and displacement of 1.2 million people out of a total pre-war population of 2.8 million. Entire villages were emptied as people fled. Soldiers, some of them still children, committed terrifying atrocities, raping and murdering people of all ages.

The war ended officially in 1997, when a democratic election was held and Charles Taylor came to power. However, his government failed to contrive mechanisms for an effective, participative state, and proved to be equally corrupt and repressive. The whole political system revolved around Taylor who, until his exodus from Liberia in August 2003, continued to repress dissent and suppress freedom of expression in the name of 'national security'. There were limited avenues for people who felt alienated from the state to articulate their concerns and grievances via alternative democratic routes. Civil society and social movements that were crippled and rendered ineffective during the war continued to lack even basic capacity. Furthermore, Taylor continuously used a strategy of covertly encouraging regional instability in the surrounding countries to secure his regime in Liberia, including providing support to rebel armies and dissidents from neighbouring Sierra Leone and Guinea. The Peace Agreement finally signed in August 2003 in Liberia was an extremely positive sign for the country's future, and if sustained, should have positive repercussions throughout the region.

## Sierra Leone

The Liberian civil war that began in 1989 soon spilled over into neighbouring Sierra Leone, where home grown tensions were already leading to difficulties. In 1991, Corporal Foday Sankoh declared to the one party government of President Saidu Momoh that unless he allowed multi-party politics within 90 days, his Liberian-trained Revolutionary United Front (RUF) movement would launch an armed campaign to overthrow his government. The RUF attacked and the resulting conflict caused the displacement of at least 70% of the population. The RUF ranks were later swelled by the defection of disloyal members of the national army.

Since then, the RUF has fought four consecutive governments in an ongoing civil war. Both pro-government forces and the RUF have been accused of human rights abuses, but unlike most wars where civilian casualties are an unfortunate by-product of the fighting between combatants, the RUF stands out from all the belligerents for its policy of deliberately targeting civilians. Their campaign has been characterised by the systematic destruction of property, as entire cities, towns, and villages have been razed to the ground. Since 1991, civil war between the government and the RUF has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (well over a third of the population) many of whom became refugees in neighbouring countries. A Peace Agreement signed in July 1999 collapsed in May 2000 after the RUF took over 500 UN peacekeepers hostage. In May 2002, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah came to power in democratic elections and the war in Sierra Leone was declared officially over.

## Guinea-Conakry

Guinea's involvement in the sub-regional conflict also goes back to the beginning of the Liberian war, when some of the warring faction leaders used Guinea as a base to launch attacks against the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The fighting in Liberia during the 1990s spilled over the border into Guinea on several occasions and border skirmishes continued after the civil war subsided in 1997. Guinea had taken sides against rebel leader Charles Taylor in Liberia's civil war and was part of the Nigerian-led ECOWAS forces that intervened in the crisis. Relations between Guinean President Conté and Taylor thus remained sour after Taylor became Liberia's President in 1997. Since 2000, fighting at the junction of Guinea's border with Sierra Leone and Liberia has increased. Guinea's army has been battling a variety of factions, including rebel Guineans and Liberians, and Sierra Leone's RUF. Guinea has been further dragged into the crisis by hosting over 500,000 refugees, some of whom were alleged to be RUF fighters from Sierra Leone and Liberian rebels. Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia have since been trading accusations against each other for supporting each other's dissidents and tensions are high between the three countries.

AN OIL FLARE ABOVE THE AKARA-OLU  
COMMUNITY IN THE RIVERS STATE,  
NIGER DELTA



## Nigeria

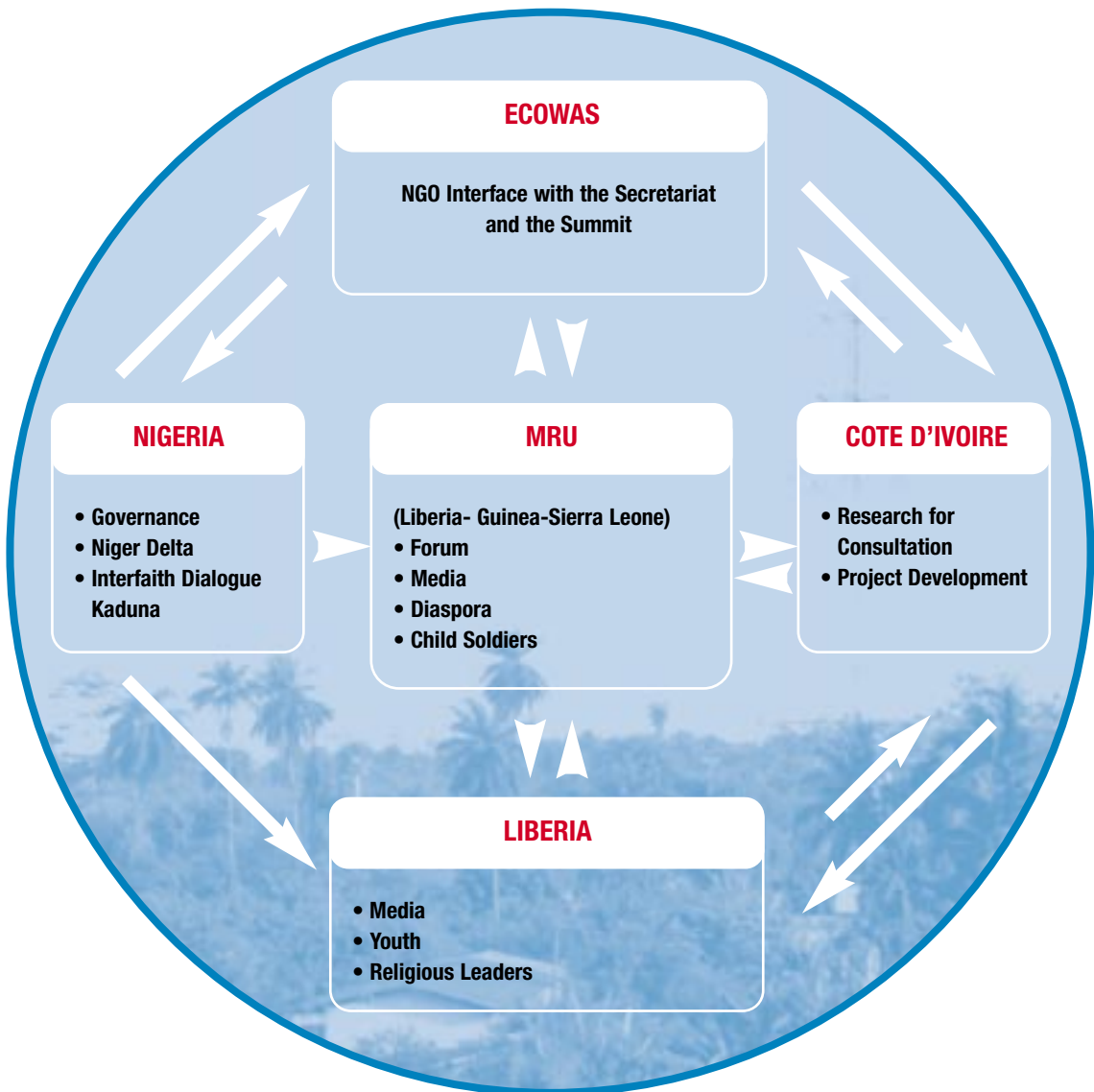
Paradoxically, since the elections of the current democratic government of President Obasanjo in May 1999, Nigeria has experienced more conflicts than under previous military authoritarian regimes. Unfortunately, democracy has offered an opening for long held grievances, previously suppressed by military governments, to find violent expressions. There has been a continuous perception that resources are not being distributed equally, and that the dominant group, the Hausa-Fulani, has used its control over military institutions to appropriate a disproportionate share of the country's natural resources. There are two major conflicts in Nigeria: a northern conflict based loosely on religious tensions between Christians and Muslims, and more deeply on economic differences; and a three-pronged conflict in the Niger Delta involving communities, governments and oil companies. Minority groups in the Niger Delta, where oil is being extracted, feel they have seen limited benefits from the oil wealth, which is accruing largely to the central government and foreign oil companies. Conflict in Nigeria has therefore been based not only on religious and ethnic tensions and differences, but also on the inequitable distribution of revenues from natural resources and regional disparities in wealth. These causes are not unrelated.



## 5. CONTEXT FOR ENGAGEMENT

The conflict in the MRU countries is highly interconnected with crisis in one country directly impacting the situation in the other countries. It is clear that any efforts to build peace among the three MRU nations must take into account these sub-regional dynamics. However, weak national initiatives by individual governments and organisations in the MRU area, working in isolation from other networks in neighbouring countries, have not provided sufficient capacity to sustain programmes for lasting peace in the sub-region. It is our firm belief that the involvement of civil society organisations in the promotion of local, national and sub-regional peacebuilding activities is crucial for the reduction of existing violence and the prevention of further violent conflict in the area. We are currently running four projects in the region in accordance with this strategy: a Liberian project, a Nigerian project, and two regional projects with ECOWAS and within the MRU Countries.

### Schematic description of the West Africa Programme





## 6. LIBERIAN PROJECTS

The recent conflict in the Mano River Union area mainly originated from problems in Liberia. This is not to say that there were no home-grown problems in other countries. Liberia was the first country that the West Africa Programme formally engaged with, and the projects in Liberia have now expanded to form part of the Mano River Union Project. Two projects in Liberia form the core basis of International Alert's engagement there: a media project and a youth project.

### Media Project

The media project was established in 1998 against the backdrop of a protracted civil war, the absence of an official opposition party, President Taylor's domination of the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government, suppression of freedom of the press and, in the last years of Taylor's government, a strategy of intimidating outspoken human rights activists and journalists. Although there are many identifiable civil society groups with the potential to contribute to peacebuilding, the media is particularly crucial as it can act as a double-edged sword during times of conflict, either exacerbating discord or promoting peace. Strong, independent media can play a pivotal role in ushering in peaceful democratic change, while misconception of issues, non-verification of facts and lack of objective analysis can act to exacerbate conflict. It is therefore essential that media practitioners be sensitised to the need for responsible reporting and are able to report independently and transparently.

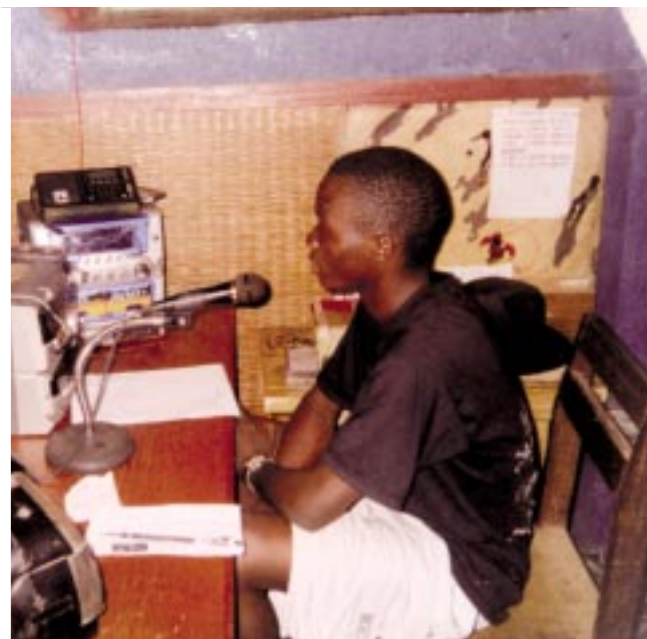
The repression of conventional communication mediums such as newsprint and radio in Liberia prevented groups and communities from articulating their concerns, needs and rights without fear and the threat of violence. IA and its local partners established the media project with dual intentions: to support conventional media practitioners and to develop conflict resolution skills among more traditional mechanisms for popular communication. This implies interacting not only with professional media practitioners, but also with alternative communicators such as local cultural sects, dance and drama groups, town criers and representatives from various age, gender and ethnic groups.

The media project has involved a wide range of training workshops targeting these different groups. Projects in the first year of the programme focused on training conventional media institutions and practitioners, such as journalists and editors, in professional journalistic practices and conflict transformation skills. The past two years have seen more capacity training for traditional media practitioners, especially in rural areas, helping to make their message part of mainstream Liberian discourse. In January 2002 a conference in Monrovia brought together media practitioners from all 15 counties of the country, along with government officials and representatives of peacebuilding NGOs. In the same month a radio station sub-project helped strengthen the capacity of four of the seven local FM radio stations in and around the Gbarnga area, including producing various programmes on peacebuilding, sex education, human rights and community development. Throughout these workshops and meetings, IA has co-operated extensively with our partners in Liberia including the Press Union of Liberia and the Centre for Justice and Peace Studies.

The Liberian media project has been successful on a number of levels. The workshops and encounters with traditional communicators have confirmed that the message of peace is better rooted in a social system and practices that have a legitimate traditional and cultural basis. In this regard, the project acknowledged the existence of rules, laws and practices in the traditional system that can be used to prevent and resolve conflict. Furthermore, there is a general



**LEFT:** ONE WEEK TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR REPORTERS 'PARTNERSHIP FOR MEDIA RECONSTRUCTIONS IN LIBERIA' AUGUST 4 - 9, 1999.



**RIGHT:** YOUTH AIRING PEACE MESSAGES OVER THE RADIO IN LIBERIA

consensus among government officials, the UN, international NGOs and civil society activists that the quality of Liberian journalism has improved, becoming more reliable and less sensational. The project has made possible the creation of a space for dialogue and opportunities for expression of views in a difficult context where media practitioners have always faced severe repression by the government. The participation of women has been an integral part of the project and there has been a good interface between rural and urban media. We are currently working to integrate the Liberia media project with the regional MRU Programme media project.

## Youth Project

Our second project in Liberia began in 2000. Aimed at young people affected by war, particularly young ex-combatants, its work has been focused in the Bong and Lofa counties. A lack of education, dismal employment opportunities, minimal basic social services, child labour, drug abuse, sexual exploitation and a high incidence of child soldiers all negatively impact the future prospects for youth in Liberia. IA recognises that young people, whether literate or not, have the knowledge and skills to analyse their own problems and identify solutions. To this end, the youth project aims to empower young people to support their own peacebuilding activities, whilst also re-connecting them to their own communities and building links to income-generating programmes.

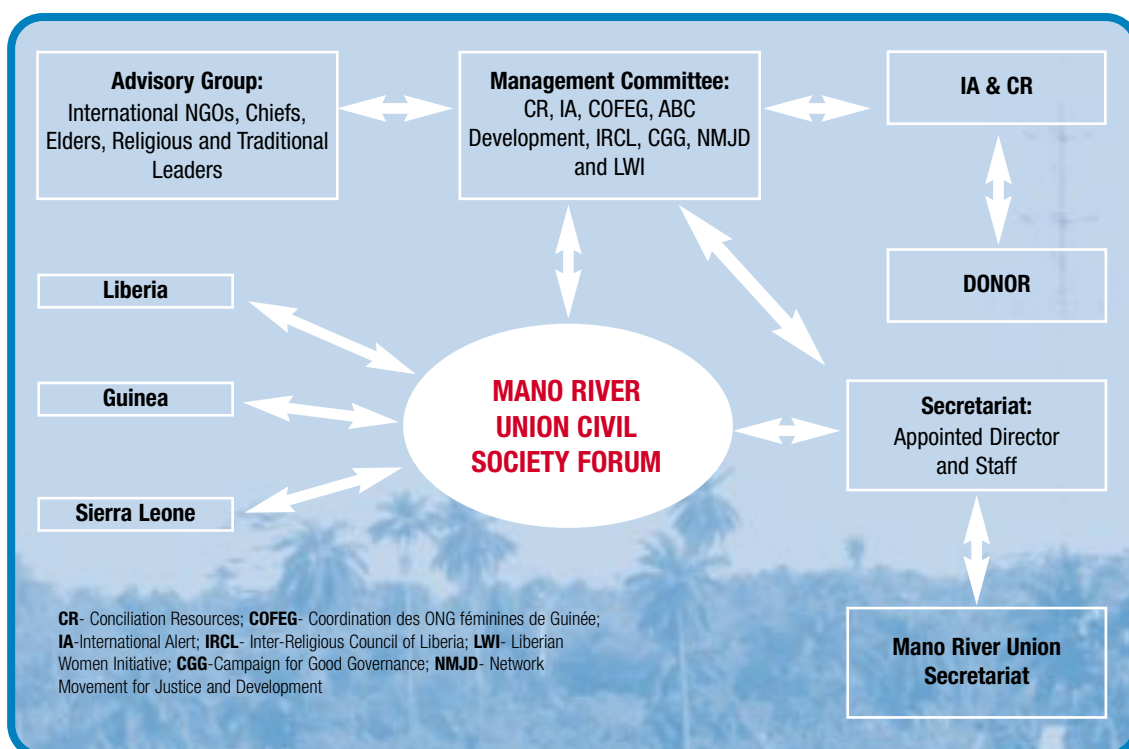
A series of participatory meetings has been held with young people in an effort to define their own needs and problems. The informal nature of the meetings created an environment for establishing a good working relationship with the young people and the members of the various communities. The youth groups have agreed upon a set of activities to embark upon including general agriculture projects, tailoring, building trades, metal works, arts and crafts, small business development and adult literacy schools. The project will be of particular importance in light of the recent Peace Agreement signed in Liberia in August 2003, as a large number of ex-combatants will be young persons.

## 7. MANO RIVER UNION PROJECTS

### MRU Forum Project

In 1994, International Alert began limited ad-hoc engagement with governments, rebel groups and civil society organisations in the Mano River Union sub-region. In 1999, through the establishment of the West Africa Programme, this engagement became systematic and the programme team has held consultations with a variety of local groups including students, religious leaders, lawyers, child soldiers, ex-combatants and women's groups from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Through these different encounters and partnerships with local bodies, it has been made abundantly clear that to tackle the underlying causes of violence, it is necessary to support and strengthen local initiatives and organisations focused on ending violence on a sub-regional basis. With this in mind, the MRU Forum has been designed to create a regional constituency of conflict prevention and resolution expertise that cuts across physical, social and ethnic boundaries.

### Mano River Union Forum Platform Of Civil Society Groups



The MRU Forum is a permanent forum of representatives of civil society organisations that work to advocate for peace, monitor events, mediate between warring parties, make representations to governments and intergovernmental bodies, and engage development and humanitarian agencies in conflict-sensitive analyses of their work. The project will involve a series of meetings, workshops and capacity building training designed to share information and experiences related to war and peace in the region, analyse the root causes of violent conflict, better understand the interconnectedness of regional conflict and formulate strategies for overcoming obstacles to peace. The secretariat of the Forum will be situated in Freetown, Sierra Leone, with equitable representation from all three countries and a cross-section of gender, age and religious groups. The Forum is a joint initiative with the UK-based organisation Conciliation Resources, as well as with partner organisations in the three countries.

PARTICIPANTS AT THE  
AKOSOMBO EMERGENCY MEETING IN  
GHANA TO DISCUSS THE LIBERIAN DRAFT  
PEACE AGREEMENT



As part of the MRU Forum project, International Alert convened an emergency conference of civil society organisations between 29 July 2003 and 3 August 2003 in Akosombo, Ghana to discuss and deliberate on the Liberian Crisis. The meeting brought together civil society organisations from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire and was part of an effort to involve these organisations and the wider public in the process of searching for and consolidating peace in Liberia. The participants deliberated and discussed the Liberian crisis, both in terms of how the current conflict has developed in Liberia, and what role the neighbouring countries can play in future peace in the country. Lessons learned from other conflicts in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire were shared, as well as an analysis of the current situation in Guinea, which is host to many Liberian refugees, and itself at risk of widespread conflict. The central focus of the meeting, however, was scrutinising the provisions of the Draft Liberian Peace Agreement to identify its impact on the peace process in Liberia, and suggesting improvements and amendments to the Agreement prior to its final draft.

The conference resulted in the drafting of a Memorandum which was then presented to the various stakeholders involved in the peace process in Liberia.<sup>2</sup> These included the Heads of State of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, representatives from ECOWAS, the African Union, the main rebel groups Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), the International Contact Group on Liberia, the UN Secretary General Special Representative in West Africa, and the MRU Secretariat. The emergency conference was important in that it was the only sub-regional initiative to support civil society input into the Liberian peace process, and was instrumental in ensuring that the voices and needs of civil society groups in the sub-region were considered in the Liberian peace process.

<sup>2</sup> "Memorandum on the Liberian Peace Process within the context of the Mano River Union countries and la Côte d'Ivoire by civil society organisations in the Mano River Union countries and la Côte d'Ivoire" Akosombo, Ghana, August 2003

## MRU Media Project

Building on the original media project in Liberia, the West Africa programme has now extended this focus to include media practitioners working on a sub-regional level throughout the MRU countries.

MRU media practitioners face many obstacles, including state control of the media, laws used to stifle fair reporting, lack of access to government information, minimal cross-cultural co-operation and a general lack of financial and moral support from other civil society actors. To address these challenges, IA has organised a number of meetings with media practitioners from all three MRU countries. Care was taken to select participants from a variety of backgrounds including rural and urban practitioners, men and women, anglophone and francophone reporters and print and broadcast media. These consultative meetings have mobilised people at both the regional and national levels, creating much more sub-regional awareness of the interconnectedness of the conflict and its actors. As a result of the meetings, a commonality of interest in peace is being built throughout the media groups, and an informal network among media practitioners is now being used to exchange information, crosscheck facts and provide moral support to members.

THREE-DAY CONSULTATION OF  
JOURNALISTS & MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS  
FROM THE MRU COUNTRIES



## MRU Youth Project

Also building on our experience in Liberia working with young people, the West Africa Programme has extended its youth focus throughout the MRU region. Many young people in the MRU area face an uncertain future, carrying the burden of trauma and lacking the skills to engage in building a solid foundation for peace. The MRU conflict has militarised young people in the area to an unprecedented level, perhaps unequalled in any other part of the world. The recruitment of child soldiers has been common within all of the warring factions; it is estimated that there are over 20,000 child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Liberia alone, most of whom were forcibly recruited. Over 80 per cent of the youth in the region are unemployed and very often illiterate. They provide a large pool of available labour, predisposed for recruitment into state and non-state warring parties. In a context where poverty and deprivation are commonplace, and war becomes commercialised, being a fighter becomes a means of livelihood.

Whether or not this large group of young people remains an easy target for those seeking to mobilise violence depends on the existing system offering them hope for a viable future. Lacking formal education with few, if any, employment opportunities it is important that youth are educated in a way that will enable them to use their energies in a positive peacebuilding manner, taking on a leadership role in their society. As such, the aim of the MRU Youth Project is to advance peace processes through active participation and education of affected youths. The focus of the programme is to invest in conflict prevention by equipping young people with essential conflict management skills as well as employment skills, ensuring that tense situations do not escalate and erupt into violent conflicts.

## MRU Diaspora Project

The Diaspora project is a new project currently in development that will further strengthen local peacebuilding capacity and potential for change in the MRU region. The MRU Diaspora consists of Guineans, Liberians and Sierra Leoneans who have left their countries to escape political persecution and war and now live in neighbouring African countries, France, the UK, the USA and throughout Europe. Many of these people are members of the Opposition in their former countries, engaged intellectuals and civil society activists. They represent a group of individuals who can play a crucial role in the understanding and resolution of conflict in the area.

It is clear that the Diaspora's contribution to escalating or reducing conflict, and subsequently bringing and sustaining peace is very important. It constitutes an important economic power, being a considerable source of foreign currency for all three countries, as most of those living abroad send money home. Some members of the Diaspora have close relations to the armed groups in the region and could use this relationship to bring about peace. Those who have settled in countries that are influential in the international scene are often in close contact with power structures that can have important consequences on political and social development structures.

## 8. NIGERIAN PROJECTS

The West Africa Programme's fourth initiative is based in Nigeria, undoubtedly the most strategically important country in West Africa in terms of long-term conflict resolution strategies. It is the only country in West Africa that has the capacity to shoulder the economic burden and play the role of leader in regional peace and security. As such, International Alert's rationale for working in Nigeria stems from the recognition that peace in Nigeria is good in and of itself, but is also important in terms of the negative ramifications that instability in Nigeria can have throughout the sub-region and Mano River Union countries. IA's West Africa Programme has three projects in Nigeria.

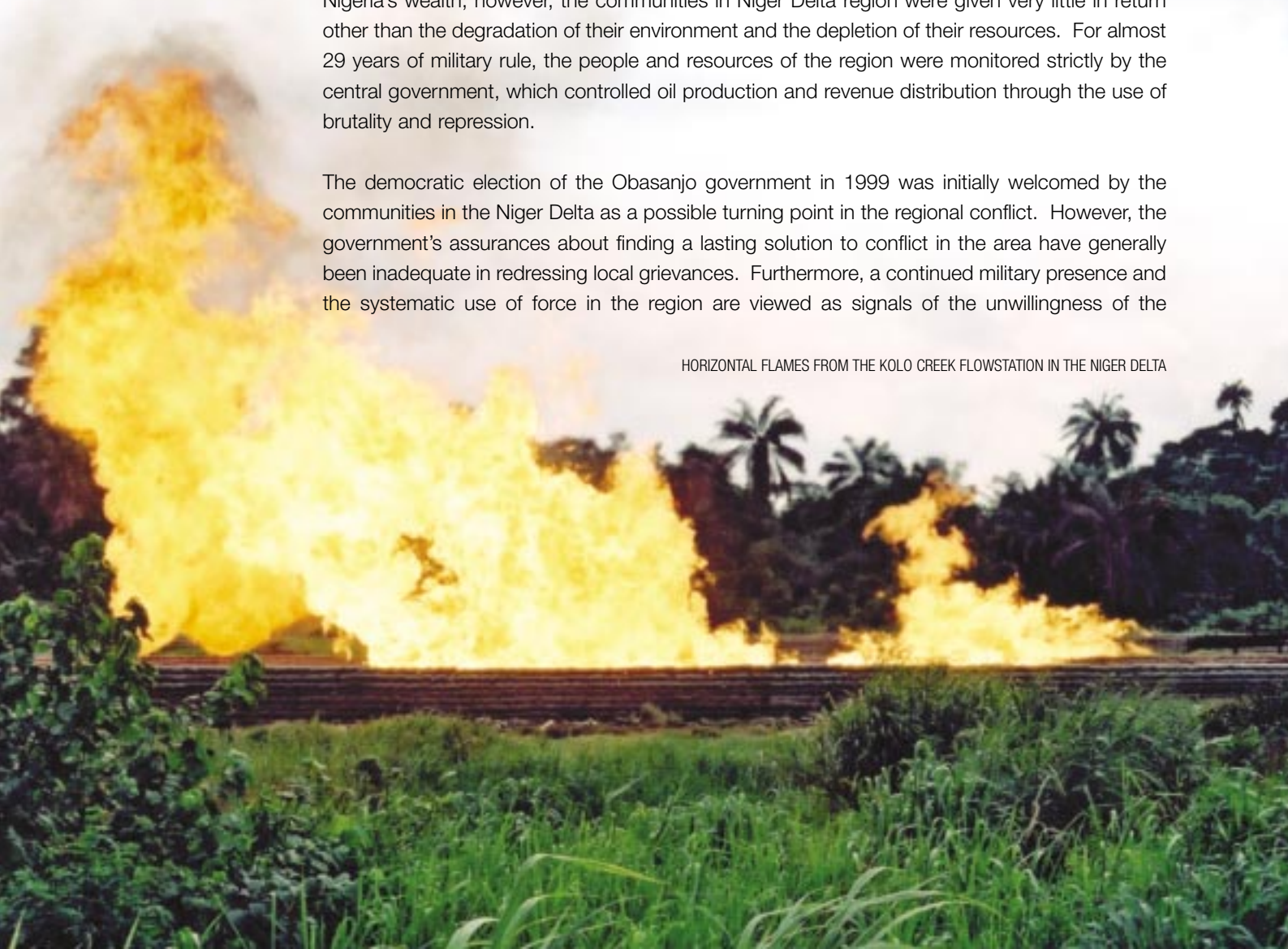
### Niger Delta Project

The ongoing conflict in the Niger Delta region centres around oil production and the uneven distribution of the revenues it creates. The objective of the Niger Delta Project is to contribute to peacebuilding by supporting local initiatives and creating a space for the different stakeholders to enter into dialogue. The main parties to the conflict are the Nigerian government, the various communities in the Niger Delta region and the oil companies involved in the extraction and production in the area.

When the Nigerian civil war ended in 1970, oil became the central factor in the political economy of the country, accounting for 90 per cent of export earnings. Despite producing the bulk of Nigeria's wealth, however, the communities in Niger Delta region were given very little in return other than the degradation of their environment and the depletion of their resources. For almost 29 years of military rule, the people and resources of the region were monitored strictly by the central government, which controlled oil production and revenue distribution through the use of brutality and repression.

The democratic election of the Obasanjo government in 1999 was initially welcomed by the communities in the Niger Delta as a possible turning point in the regional conflict. However, the government's assurances about finding a lasting solution to conflict in the area have generally been inadequate in redressing local grievances. Furthermore, a continued military presence and the systematic use of force in the region are viewed as signals of the unwillingness of the

HORIZONTAL FLAMES FROM THE KOLO CREEK FLOWSTATION IN THE NIGER DELTA



government to engage in productive dialogue with the identifiable groups involved in the conflict, namely the communities and oil companies. As a result, a form of low intensity conflict is currently unfolding, which threatens to escalate, resulting in serious political and economic ramifications for Nigerian stability. Should the conflict continue unmanaged, it could degenerate into an armed conflict, further creating problems for regional peace and security in Africa.

The West Africa Programme is working in collaborations with IA's Business & Conflict Programme and its Great Lakes Women's Peace Programme to support local peace initiatives in the Niger Delta. There are many challenges inherent in working in this area: a distrust of outsiders, a lack of all-encompassing leadership and an overall difficulty identifying a cross-cutting organisation which is truly representative of the various ethnic, ideological and generational tendencies within the communities.

The project works with women as a strategic entry point for conflict resolution. There is an emerging consensus that women make a substantial contribution to peacebuilding, and that women's groups and their respective leaders are a potential body that, once empowered, can develop high stakes in peacebuilding in the Niger Delta.

Women in the Niger Delta constitute a social category that is close to being truly representative of the varying social tendencies and cleavages in the Delta. The traditional rulers or elders have been tainted as corrupt, accused of colluding with the Nigerian Government and the multinational oil companies against the interests of their respective communities. While the youth are acknowledged as power brokers through militancy and use of force, they have not always succeeded in demonstrating that they are

A GROUP DISCUSSION AT THE PORT  
HARCOURT WOMEN'S TRAINING WORKSHOP,  
NIGER DELTA, DECEMBER 2002





responsible or that they are not being manipulated themselves by the oil companies; some have become opportunistic, employing violence for personal gains without regard to established social norms. Increasingly, through empowerment, women are moving away from passivity to action in conflict, but more importantly, are relying on non-violent means and approaches to peacebuilding, in sharp contrast to the methods of the youth.

The project focuses on empowering women leaders in the Niger Delta to enable them to develop capacity, skills and common purpose in their efforts to build peace in the region. The project undertakes research into the dynamics of conflict, enhances trust building among women in the Niger Delta region, and is setting up a resource centre as a focal point for networking and dialogue with governments and oil companies. Based on the needs expressed by these women and community leaders, and working with the expertise of IA's Business & Conflict Programme and Great Lakes Women's Peace Programme, the project aims to help create the conditions for dialogue between oil companies, communities and other actors that will lead to practical activities to maximise the positive contribution of the oil industry for development.

## Northern Nigeria Project

In Northern Nigeria, IA is running a project with the objective of strengthening the capacity of religious leaders and their organisations to improve and enhance communication and co-operation between the faiths. The conflict in Northern Nigeria is mainly, but not solely, about resource distribution. It manifests itself as a religious conflict, but stems from a range of other causes, including ethnicity, corruption, civil-military relations and the centralisation of Nigeria's otherwise federal system of government.

MEETING OF THE EMIR AND THE EMIRATE  
COUNCIL OF ZARIA, NORTHERN NIGERIA,  
DECEMBER 2000



Tensions between Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria have been exacerbated by the introduction of Sharia Islamic Law in a number of Northern states throughout the 1990s. IA has held consultations in the states of Kano, Kaduna and Plateau. The West Africa Programme is currently working in Kaduna, where the declaration of intent by the state government in 2001 to adopt the Sharia Law led to a major upsurge of violence in the area, leaving over 2,000 people dead and tensions between religious groups very high.

IA has been working with one of the main national organisations working in the area of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, the Inter-Faith Mediation Centre (IFMC).<sup>3</sup> Together, IA and IFMC have designed a joint project with the objective of creating an institutionalised forum for dialogue and other peace building initiatives. This project includes elements such as helping Christians understand Sharia Law and helping Muslims understand Christian anxieties about human rights education in schools, free press and religious values.

## Good Governance Project

The West Africa Programme has developed a project designed to support the formation of a coalition of local NGOs in Nigeria to be engaged in advocacy work on governance and post-election issues. The project was designed in the aftermath of the 2003 elections, and aims to empower local organisations and members of local communities with a sound framework to engage with newly elected parliamentarians and their support staff. The project will also arrange a series of encounters with state governors to advocate on matters of leadership, and discuss issues and practices of good governance and accountability. The advocacy project is part of a process of active engagement and capacity building, overseen by members of a coalition of local NGOs with the support of IA. The IFMC will be the implementing partner in Nigeria. Such an intervention is important because election results have been contested in most states.

A consultation will be held with 12 credible, thematically organised and experienced NGOs from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria to design the objectives of the project and form an informal federation to represent the core partner group. IA will facilitate the first meeting of the coalition, which will provide an important opportunity for all participants to identify current issues of concern in the light of the outcome of the elections and in relation to the particular needs of the constituencies they represent. As the international partner, IA will enrich and supplement the issues and themes identified from its international perspectives, drawing on its wide range of field experiences from different parts of the world – for example, in the spheres of political accountability, transparency, human security, distribution of resources, respect of human rights (individual and collective), gender relations – and how these impact on, or are influenced by, good or bad governance. It is anticipated that members of the coalition will then arrange a series of community-based meetings and training in their respective geo-political zones to listen to the key issues of concern coming from the grassroots and other local NGOs, share the broader experiences of other members of the Coalition, and promote the need for accountable government and responsible representation by elected officials.

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<sup>3</sup> Formerly known as the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum (MCDf)



## 9. ECOWAS PROJECT<sup>4</sup>

CONSULTATION ON STRENGTHENING THE  
HUMAN SECURITY CAPACITIES OF ECOWAS  
AND WEST AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY, JUNE  
2003, ABUJA, NIGERIA

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created in 1975 and is made up of 15 member states in the West Africa region. When ECOWAS was created, the intention was to promote economic cooperation and integration in the region so as to transcend the historically inherited problem of underdevelopment. However, bad governance, human rights violations, authoritarian rule and violence have undermined this goal.

Throughout the 1990s, the West African region was faced with tremendous difficulties of which the Liberian crisis was typical. ECOWAS was impelled to intervene in Liberia, and did so successfully through the Economic Community Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), an alternative body created to address conflict issues. However, what became clear from their intervention was that the basis in international law was weak and the nature of engagement in conflict resolution in the region was ad-hoc. Subsequently, informed by the lessons from Liberia, ECOWAS sought to develop clearer norms and a legal basis for regional peace and security. This marked the gradual development of more systematic norms for collective security and a shift from the original goal of economic development to include peace and security, with the argument that without peace there can be no development. The main instruments developed to address this change were the 'Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security' in December 1999, as well as the 'Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance' of 2001.

The West Africa Programme's ECOWAS Project works to provide further support to the development of the conflict resolution capacities of ECOWAS by facilitating an institutionalised dialogue between regional

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<sup>4</sup> Olu Arowobusoye, Lulseged Abebe and other colleagues have made contributions to this section of the report.



WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM IN ACCRA, GHANA, DECEMBER 2003

civil society organisations and the ECOWAS Secretariat. Civil society organisations (CSOs) from throughout the region have significant experience working on issues relating to human security, education, health, democracy, human rights, gender equality, and conflict transformation, and have the capacity to strengthen ECOWAS's conflict prevention and resolution capacities. Receiving input from these CSOs can reinforce ECOWAS's processes and decision-making and is a key step to achieving change in the region.

In an effort to formalise entry points for interaction between civil society organisations and ECOWAS, IA and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) organised a two-day consultation in collaboration with ECOWAS held at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, from 30 May to 1 June 2003. The consultation brought together over 45 participants from civil society organisations/social movements, ECOWAS Zonal Officers, government representatives, donors and experts from the region to analyse, discuss and strategise on issues of regional human security. The consultation concluded with the adoption of a communiqué, encouraging ECOWAS and CSOs to institutionalise their relationship and to pursue a co-ordinated human security agenda. To consolidate the process, the consultation formed an eleven member ad-hoc committee of ECOWAS and civil society members, and the concept of the West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) was developed.

The objective of the WACSOF Forum is to gather together CSOs and stakeholders involved in conflict transformation and humanitarian work in West Africa prior to every ECOWAS Summit, with a view to analysing the state of conflicts in the region to making recommendations to the Summit. The first WACSOF Forum took place in Accra, Ghana in December 2003, with participation from over 150 individuals from civil society organisations from 13 countries in West Africa. The WACSOF Forum meeting laid the foundation for future relationships between ECOWAS and civil society organisations, and presents an essential step towards strengthening conflict transformation processes in the region.

## 10. ACHIEVEMENTS

Outlining achievements or success in conflict resolution is a difficult concept as conflict transformation work is not a question of immediate results or easily quantifiable outcomes. The process towards achieving just and lasting peace demands time, patience and protracted engagement in constructive efforts leading to medium and long-term change. Through our experience over the past five years, in collaboration with our partners and other actors, we have achieved and learned a great deal. We have succeeded in engaging local and sub-regional civil society groups in co-operative peace processes, and have been instrumental in bringing local, participative conflict-prevention initiatives and peacebuilding training to the area. This has contributed to the creation of a more conducive environment for conflict resolution on a number of levels.

In Liberia, instability and the continued imposition of sanctions and donor disinterest in the country have been significant challenges to working on conflict resolution. With limited external resources, civil society and peacebuilding groups were hard pressed to organise themselves effectively. However, the West Africa Programme has registered positive developments in the country. An independent report commissioned by International Alert in 2002 looking at the Media Project showed that it had laid concrete foundations for dialogue among parties in the Liberian conflict. According to the report, the project activities helped to empower marginalised and excluded groups such as women, youth and ethnic minorities to use both traditional and modern media to articulate their views and express their

CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE BEING  
AWARDED TO A PARTICIPANT OF A MEDIA  
TRAINING WORKSHOP, LIBERIA, 1999



concerns. Additionally, the training contributed to the programming quality of both amateur and conventional radio stations that now include vernaculars to convey the message of peace and reconstruction in their programmes (Evaluation Report, October 2002). The Youth Project has also developed a very close and trusted relationship with a coalition of the most credible civil society organisations in the country.

The achievements that IA has registered in Nigeria centre on the relationship building that has taken place among various conflicting groups, and the strengthening of the coalition of religious groups in the country. In particular, the visit of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum to IA's head offices in April 2002 was a positive event and helped the MCDF and IA to better understand the complexities of working in Nigeria, and to establish a better relationship with the donor community, notably the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The inclusion of increasing numbers of women in consultative meetings in the Niger Delta has proved a positive step for conferring more legitimacy upon them as a critical group poised for peacebuilding. The Banjul meeting of August 2000, co-ordinated by the West Africa Programme and our partners, was the first time that women from the Niger Delta region had come together and had met with members of the national government, including the Minister for Women's Affairs and the Minister of State for Women's Affairs. These processes and the training workshops that have followed on from this meeting have enabled the women's groups to form networks, both formal and informal. In November 2003, at a workshop in Calabar, the coalition of women's organisations committed to working together in the future, calling themselves the Niger Delta Women's Forum for Peace and Development (NIDWOPPED). The group is now ready to engage in dialogue with stakeholders including oil companies, the government and community members.

PARTICIPANTS AT THE PORT HARCOURT  
WOMEN'S TRAINING WORKSHOP,  
NIGER DELTA, DECEMBER 2002



The MRU Projects have pioneered sub-regional and regional approaches to conflict resolution in the area. A 3-day consultative meeting on building peace constituencies in the media in March 2002 brought together journalists and media practitioners in the area for the first time ever. This provided an opportunity for these groups to strategise about peaceful processes for the region, and a concrete plan came out of the communiqué. An emergency meeting organised in August 2003 during the Liberian peace negotiation process was instrumental in ensuring civil society organisations were able to contribute to the Liberian peace process at a critical point in the conflict in the Mano River Union area; it was an excellent example of how well civil society organisations from across the sub-region can work together to build peace. The establishment of the MRU Peace Forum Secretariat in Freetown in January 2004 will provide a permanent space for dialogue among civil society groups from the MRU countries.

Our work alongside ECOWAS has also broken new ground with a regional approach to conflict transformation. We have been instrumental in institutionalising conflict resolution mechanisms within the ECOWAS agenda and are committed to ensuring that these mechanisms are supported effectively by civil society organisations in the future. In December 2003, we organised the very first West Africa Civil Society Forum, which brought together 150 representatives of civil society organisations from 13 ECOWAS member states. During the forum, the participants adopted a communiqué and charter to institutionalise a relationship between ECOWAS and civil society. These developments are crucial steps towards the attainment of stability and peace in the region.

In summary, the West Africa Programme, with the help of its partners and funders, has made the following significant contributions towards achieving peace in West Africa:

- Building better networks for dialogue, both formally and informally
- Bringing many Liberian actors together for the first time and creating a space for dialogue for all groups involved in the conflict; adopting the Monrovia Declaration for Peace & Development in December 2002, heralding the Peace Agreement of 2003
- Providing ongoing support to Liberia at a time when many donors and agencies were abandoning the country due to the challenges of working there
- During the Liberian peace negotiations in August 2003, supporting partners by bringing together civil society organisations from throughout the Mano River Union and Côte d'Ivoire sub-region
- Establishing a permanent Mano River Union Peace Forum and Secretariat in Freetown, Sierra Leone for civil society groups to discuss regional matters of peace and security
- Generating and executing an integrated approach to conflict at the national, regional and sub-regional levels
- Organising the first-ever civil society consultative meeting alongside ECOWAS and institutionalising the ECOWAS-Civil Society Organisation relationship with respect to human security in the region

## 11. CHALLENGES TO OUR WORK

- Globalisation presents challenges for development in terms of international trade, the debt question, global inequalities, and the continued role of the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank, IMF, WTO, etc)
- Oil in Africa presents both a blessing and a curse depending on how it is managed internally, and how it relates to external actors such as multinational oil companies and foreign governments
- Good normative frameworks exist at the ECOWAS, NEPAD and AU levels to make a link between governance, security and development, prohibiting the seizure of state power by unconstitutional means. However, the practical application of these frameworks continues to present challenges to long-term peacebuilding
- Sub-regional instability continues in the Mano River Union region and Côte d'Ivoire
- There exists a lack of co-ordination between the various bodies practising conflict resolution, including human rights, development and conflict actors and agencies
- There is a need to consider alternative development models which take into consideration the relationship between development policies and the incidence of conflict

## 12. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE

- ECOWAS becoming more proactive in peacemaking
- Peace in Liberia- which could contribute positively to peace in the MRU region
- Frameworks to deal with conflict within ECOWAS, NEPAD and the AU are positive steps and can be improved
- The first democratic transition from a civilian government to the same civilian government in Nigeria
- Nigeria's commitment to peacemaking
- The formal indictment of warlords in the Mano River Union countries
- International goodwill to support post-Taylor Liberia
- An enabling environment for civil society organisations

## 13. CONCLUSION AND APPRECIATION

International Alert believes that sustainable peace can best be achieved through local participation and consultation. The West Africa Programme remains committed to engaging with all the major groups throughout society who are impacted by war: representatives from varying age groups, religions, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, men and women and the Diaspora. The economic success and future development of West Africa will depend on the capacity of local actors to achieve sustainable peace and overcome the many challenges that the region faces. Basic development is also essential for peace as underdevelopment and poverty contribute to hardship and conflict.

None of the achievements described above would have been possible without the ongoing support of our funders and dedicated partners. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the following groups and individuals, and look forward to working together in the future towards peacebuilding in the West African region.



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 Misereor (Germany)  
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 Open Society Institute for West Africa (OSIWA)  
 The Sir David Thorne's Trust project  
 (radio station)  
 Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)

**PARTNERS****LIBERIA****Media Project**

Centre for Justice and Peace Studies  
 Talking Drum Studio (of the Search for  
 Common Ground)  
 Press Union of Liberia (PUL)  
 Justice and Peace Commission (JPC)

**Youth Project**

Justice and Peace Commission (JPC)  
 Press Union of Liberia  
 Centre for Justice and Peace Studies  
 Interfaith Council of Liberia  
 Liberian Women Initiative  
 Association of Female Lawyers  
 of Liberia  
 Liberian Human Rights Centre  
 Liberian Democracy Resource Centre  
 Talking Drum Studio (of the Search for  
 Common Ground)

**Government and Statutory Bodies**

National Reconstruction and Reconciliation Commission  
 Ministries: Education, Information, Gender, Youth

**NIGERIA****Kaduna (Northern Project)**

Interfaith Mediation Centre (formerly Muslim-Christian  
 Dialogue Forum)  
 Islamic Human Rights Organisation, London, UK.

**Niger Delta Project**

Agape Our Birth Right  
 Arogbo Ijo Beni

Arogbo Iyoro Belemu Ikputu  
 Centre for Rural Integration & Development  
 Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility  
 Child Life Project  
 Coastline Women of the Niger Delta States  
 Egi Women Council  
 Eleme Women Co-operative  
 Epie/Atissa Women Forum  
 Federation of Ogoni Women  
 Gbaramatu/Egbema Women Forum  
 Gender Rights Action  
 Grassroots Development Organisation  
 Iko Women Progressive Association  
 Man & Water Survival Project  
 National Council of Women Societies  
 Niger Delta Development Programme  
 Niger Delta Women For Justice  
 NOSAD  
 Ogoni Students  
 Rural Health and Women Development  
 Sampou Women Forum  
 Ubeji Women Development Committee  
 Uchio Mpani Ibeno  
 Ugborodo Women Society  
 Uvwie Ladies Vanguard  
 Warri Ladies Vanguard  
 Women Action Organisation  
 Women Economic Link

**MANO RIVER UNION PROJECT**

Conciliation Resources, UK  
 Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL)  
 Liberian Women Initiative  
 ABC Development, Guinea  
 Coordination de ONGs Feminines Guinee (COFEG), Guinea.  
 Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Sierra Leone  
 The Network Movement For Movement for Justice and  
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**ECOWAS PROJECT**

Centre for Democracy and Development  
 ECOWAS Secretariat

**REGIONAL COLLABORATORS**

African Business Group  
 Guinea-Bissau – Human Rights Association  
 Institute for Social Justice, Ghana  
 Observatoire Du Sénégal

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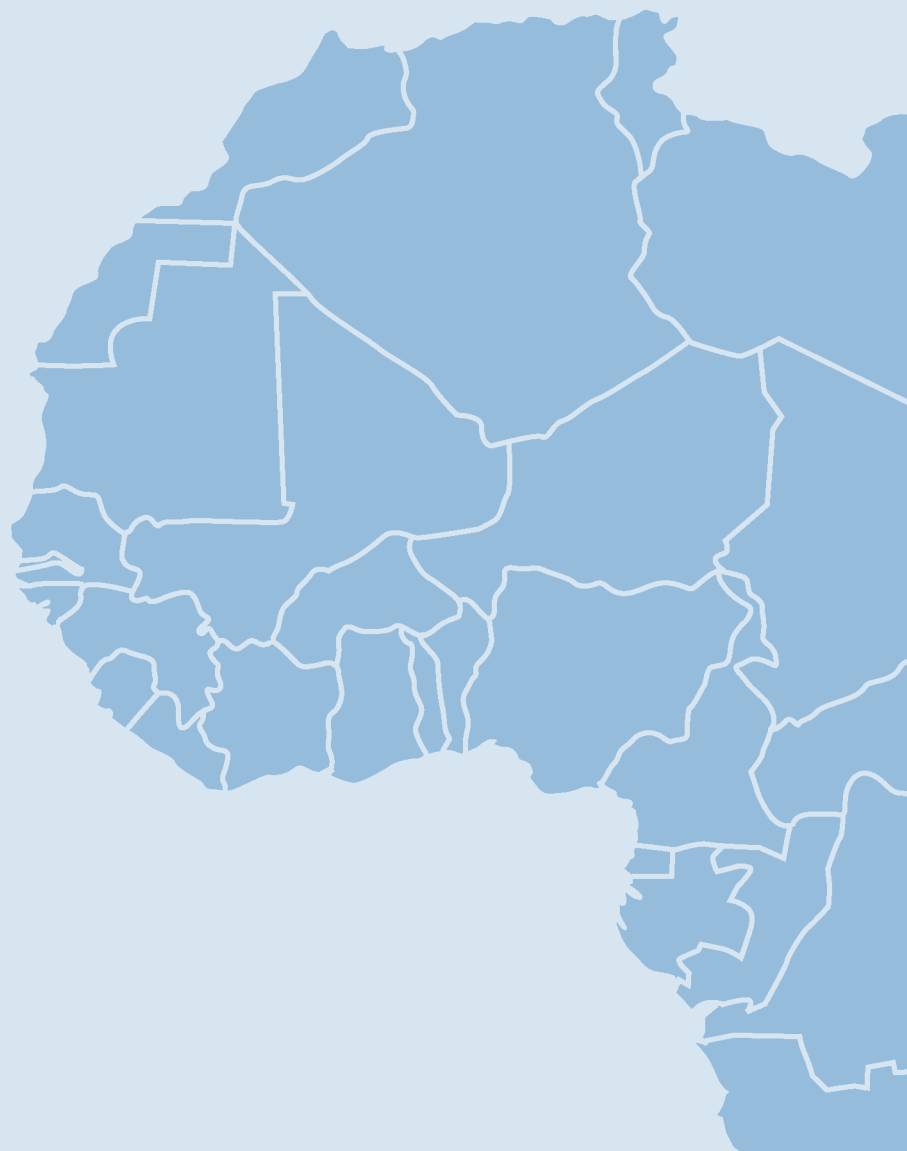
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**WHO HAVE WORKED EXTENSIVELY**

**WITH THE PROGRAMME**

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